



Voices

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42 0 1

Chapter 1 by aburton

The trail was perilous and grueling, but they had agreed to it. He looked back at the party and shook his head in disbelief. His charges were quiet and accepted their discomfort with little complaint. He was surprised. The wind whipped at their cloaks and threatened to tear their bodies from the precipitous edge.

A guide rope was bolted into the side of the mountain, a think strong life line to guide the brave through the more dangerous passes. They all held on with death grips.

Rayne warned them of the risks and advised against it. The group was adamant on getting across the mountain range as quickly as possible. Rayne told them it wouldn't be easy, but reluctantly accepted the job as their guide. He had made the trip only a handful of times. They said it was urgent they get to the capitol city with all haste. They couldn't wait for the next caravan and insisted he take them. City officials, always thinking their business was more pressing.

The howling wind berated Rayne's ears. He began to regret accepting the job, but kept telling himself it was worth the pay He looked back and assessed his charges. Their progress was steady, despite being slow. He watched as they made their way along the trail.

He shook his head. The pain was back. His head ache was coming back, great. Perfect timing. They had become more frequent and severe of late. He gritted his teeth and suffered through the pain.

One of the men bumped into him, and he realized he had stopped moving and closed his eyes, trying to fight the head ache.

'Are you OK?' The man yelled down over the

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Rayne nodded his head. "Yes! I was waiting for the rest of you to catch up." He scanned his surroundings. "There's a small cleft about twenty minutes ahead. It's not much, but we can get out this wind and have some lunch." He motioned them forward.

Twenty minutes later the group had settled into the small opening in the mountain wall. It was big enough for all of them to sit comfortably and out of the wind. Rayne watched them as they chewed quietly and exchanged brief sentences. The throbbing in his head was back with a vengeance.

"What? Did you say something" Rayne asked one of the men. They looked up at him and shook their heads. No one was talking to him.

Rayne shook his head, trying to defy the pain. It didn't work. He thought he heard talking directed at him. His vision started to blur, darken around the edges. What was going on? He rubbed his temples and closed his eyes for a minute.

Reality snapped back into focus with a choking sensation that caught Rayne's breath in his throat. The clang of metal on stone caused him to glance down and take in the scene before him. The dagger that fell from his hand was covered in their blood. His hands looked as if they were bathed in it, glistening in the sunlight with shocking clarity. The frigid mountain air was warm compared to the icy pit that had formed in his stomach. They were all dead, and he had killed them in a frenzy of madness. Then he remembered the voices, telling him to kill them. He distinctly remembered listening to them and thinking they made perfect sense.

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